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SIDS

Statement by
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on behalf of the European Union
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Mr. Chair!

It is an honour for Slovenia to present statement on behalf of the European Union.

- As confirmed in the Mauritius Strategy, CSD is the primary body responsible for the implementation of and follow up to the commitments related to SIDS. Therefore, the EU strongly supports the SIDS day, which is an integral part of the CSD programme every year.
- The EU recognises the specific challenges of SIDS as regards sustainable development in general and as regards the themes of the current session in particular.
- These challenges include adapting to climate change, increasing access to cleaner energy, promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency, shifting to more sustainable agriculture, protecting fragile ecosystems and water resources, and overcoming isolation and other vulnerabilities.
- The EU supports SIDS in addressing these challenges and is committed to the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for further Implementation (MSI).

Agriculture and Food security

- Agricultural development is crucial for many SIDS, due to its impact on food security, economic growth and employment. The last decade has seen falling investments in agriculture in SIDS. Nevertheless, the recent rise in national budgets allocated to rural and agricultural development (in line with the Maputo Declaration) is a step in the right direction.
- The economic vulnerability of SIDS is linked to the important share that natural resource sectors - like fisheries and agriculture - play in their economies, and reflects the crucial role that traditional commodities still play in their production structures. In particular, the sustainable management of fisheries should be further developed.
- Considering their vulnerability, it is important to support SIDS in designing and implementing resilience-building strategies that reflect the need to adapt to climate change, add value to commodities and diversify their economies.
- The EU supports food security through measures such as the "Food Security Thematic Programme" (FSTP). Under the FSTP global support is provided for agricultural research, food security information, policy development and strengthening farmer organisations. Furthermore, a component on natural resource management is in preparation
- In the context of food security and support especially to small farmers in SIDS, it is important to promote rural micro-enterprises, develop rural infrastructure (including water management), provide policy and technical assistance and support disaster preparedness. Here the EU's Regional Programmes of Food Security in SIDS (RPFS) has proven successful, although further implementation is required.

Water security

- Water resource management poses a number of related challenges in SIDS, both in terms of quantity and quality.
- Pressure on water resources results from increasing pollution levels and growing demand from competing sectors such as agriculture and tourism. This leads to over-exploitation. Furthermore, salt water intrusion and salination of fresh water may negatively affect public health, water security and crop production.

Rural Development

- Social challenges in rural areas require special attention: rapid population growth, the need to engage young people, job creation especially for women and young people, quality of life for those on remote outer islands.
- Furthermore, diversification of rural activities and of the economy in SIDS should be supported, for example through support to agro-tourism and the development of niche markets and value-added products (e.g. organic production). The aim is to reduce rural poverty and rural to urban migration.

Land Management

- Effective land management and the reduction of land degradation remain vital challenges on the way to sustainable management of natural resources. Biodiversity loss and deforestation need to be addressed urgently.
- Secure land tenure, the development of integrated land management policies and improved access to information on land resources are also needed.

Energy for Sustainable Development

- Access to sustainable energy services is crucial to achieve the MDGs, both globally and in SIDS. The European Development Fund 10 in the Pacific will focus inter alia on the development of renewable energy resources.
- High energy prices place a heavy burden on SIDS, particularly on poor households. It is therefore essential to build decentralised energy systems, including solar, wind and tidal energy systems, tailored to geographical circumstances.
- Increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix is vital to reduce not only emissions but also dependency on imported fuels. In many SIDS, a large proportion of export revenue is spent on energy imports.

International Trade

- Clearly, islands need market access and favourable terms of trade. Trade-related development assistance can play an important role in enhancing SIDS' capacity to benefit from globalisation. The EU already offers enhanced market access to many SIDS and encourages others to join in these efforts.

Climate as an Interlinking Issue

- Among the issues which particularly affect SIDS, climate change is a major concern. Indeed, extreme weather events and rising sea levels threaten the very existence of some islands and their livelihoods. This is one reason for the EU's commitment to reaching an ambitious, global and comprehensive agreement at the climate COP in Copenhagen in 2009.
- Climate change issues, including both mitigation and adaptation measures, should be integrated into national and international development planning. On mitigation, long term predictable policy frameworks are needed to move towards a low carbon society. On adaptation, urgent action is also needed, and this is particularly the case for SIDS. In this regard, the EU welcomes the Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol adopted at the Bali UNFCCC COP13.
- To address climate change with partners, the EU mainstreams climate change and environmental issues into geographical support programmes. The EU also launched a "Global Climate Change Alliance" (GCCA), focusing on LDCs and the most vulnerable SIDS. The GCCA provides an additional co-ordinated platform, in particular in view of a post-2012 climate agreement.
- Furthermore, the EU Action Plan on Climate Change and Development has the objective of assisting EU partner countries in meeting climate change challenges. It has four strategic priorities: (i) awareness raising, (ii) support for adaptation, (iii) support for mitigation and (iv) capacity development. Under each of these priorities, the Action Plan devises concrete actions to be implemented by the European Commission, the Member States, partner countries and other stakeholders.

Distinguished delegates, the EU will not shy away from addressing these objectives, of course, in cooperation with SIDS.

Thank you.